

Land Is Life

Action Book for Youth Solidarity with Indigenous Lumad Communities in the Philippines

Based on the true stories of ALCADDEV: Alternative Learning Center for Agriculture and Livelihood Development, an alternative Manobo high school in Han-ayan, Surigao del Sur as told to me by its youth, teachers, and elders on my Gabriela Solidarity/ Exposure Trip to Mindanao in November of 2014.

Dedicated to our beloved kasamas “Emuk” Emerito Samarca, Executive Director of ALCADDEV, “Onel” Dionel Campos, Chairman of MAPASU, and Datu “Bello” Juvello Sinzo, killed for devoting their lives to the Lumad struggle and whose presence and wisdom are infinitely with us; To the students, teachers, and families of Han-ayan, ALCADDEV, and TRIFPSS fighting for their right to education, self-determination, and defending their ancestral lands from mining and militarization; To our blood ancestors, spiritual ancestors, and earth ancestors for birthing our inheritance: memory, kultura, resilience, healing, bayanihan, power, love, wholeness.



Amalyn grew up in Han-ayan, a Lumad village in the mountains of Mindanao.



She loved going to school, learning how to grow vegetables on the farm, playing with the worms in the compost, feeding the pigs in the piggery, catching fish in the fish pond, singing songs with her friends, and playing in the river.



One day she asked her dad, "Did you like to go to school when you were little?" "No," he said, "I didn't go to school. I wasn't lucky like you." "Why not?" Amalyn asked.

Because when your grandma and grandpa were little there was no school in the mountains. They had to walk very far every day to go to school in the lowlands.

When they finally got to school they didn't have fun because other kids teased them for being different.

The teachers told them they couldn't speak their language or sing their songs.

Grandpa and grandma missed being in the mountains when they were at school. And their family couldn't pay for the transportation, books, and uniforms.

They didn't like school in the lowlands so they didn't send me to school when I was little.



When I grew up, strangers from the city tried to force us to leave our homes and farms in the mountains.

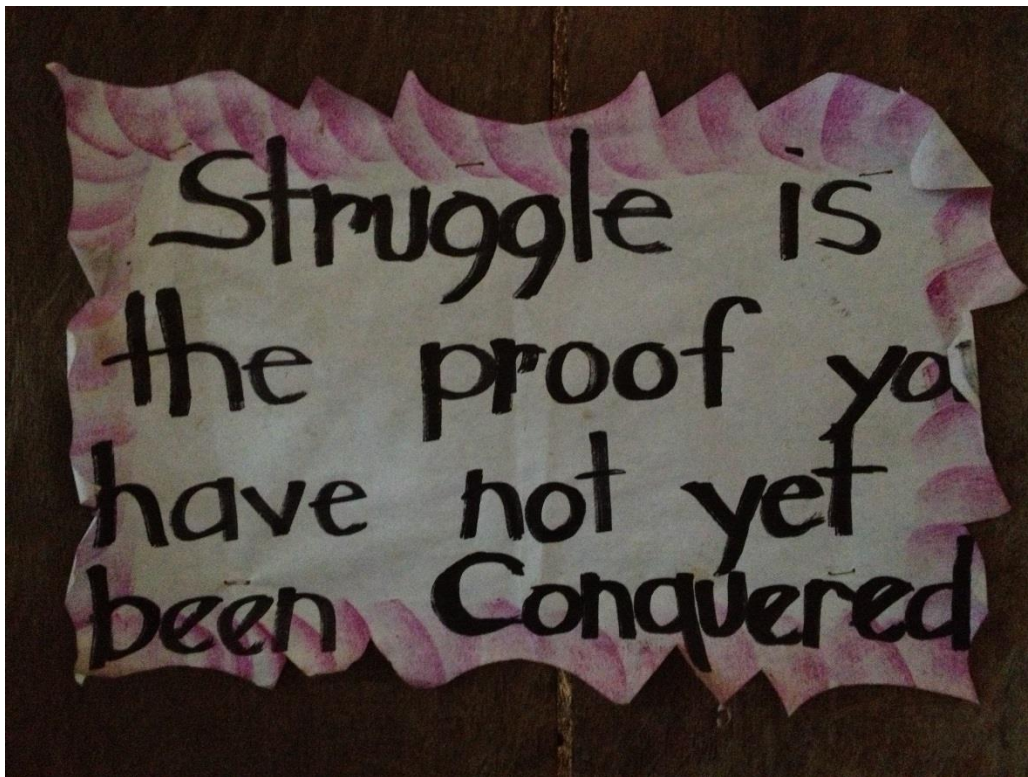
They worked for the logging company and they wanted to cut down all our trees to sell.

They worked for the mining company and they wanted to dig up our mountains for minerals, gold, copper, nickel to sell.

Amalyn hugged her daddy, "You must have been so scared."



We were very scared, but we decided to unite with the other villages to protect our homes and our mountains from being destroyed.



Amalyn asked, "What did you do to stop them?"



We decided to build a school for our children. Everyone in the community helped build the school from the children to the elders.

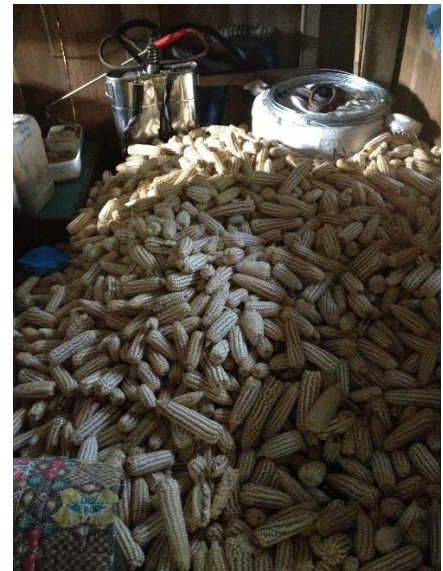


"But how would a school stop them?" She asked.



So you could learn to speak our language, to dance our dances, to sing our songs...

Then you would know who you are, you would know who came before you, you would know how to live for those who will come after you.



So you could learn our history, learn to live in harmony with earth, learn to grow food and raise animals to feed your mind, body, and spirit...

Then you would have all the food you need, you would not need to work for the logging or mining companies to cut down our trees or dig up our mountains just to feed your families.



So you could learn to love our mountains, learn to love our people, because land is life, because you protect what you love.



Then Amalyn smiled at her daddy, "I love our school. I love our mountains. I love our people. I love you daddy. And I protect what I love."

THE END

Background

On Mindanao, an island in the southern Philippines, foreign companies are destroying the environment and robbing indigenous Filipino peoples of their ancestral lands and livelihoods. Lumad is the Cebuano term for "native" or "indigenous", describing the 18 indigenous tribes from Mindanao. Corporate US-based agriculture like Dole, Del Monte, and Monsanto, are putting local farms out of business and growing crops to sell around the world, not to feed local or indigenous Filipinos. Foreign and Filipino logging and mining companies are grabbing lands, and stripping away Mindano's forests and mountains to extract the largest iron deposit in the world, and some of the largest gold, nickel, and copper deposits in Asia. The mines and siltation pollute the rivers and ocean, killing crops, livestock, and people.

Protecting and paving the way for foreign companies is the Philippine military, forcibly evacuating communities from their ancestral lands, occupying indigenous schools that are the heart of communities' resistance, and targeting innocent civilians. The military's "Oplan Bayanihan" a counter-insurgency program, has labelled alternative indigenous schools, indigenous people's organizations, and anyone critical of the government as rebels, resulting in horrific human rights abuses including harassment, arrests, kidnapping, torture, and killings of community members, leaders, teachers, and humanitarian workers.

In Han-ayan in the jungle mountains of Surigao del Sur, like in many Lumad communities, the community's solidarity against mining is based around their alternative indigenous school founded by MAPASU, an alliance of Lumad tribes. The full Cebuano name translates into "Persevere in the Struggle for the Next Generation." MAPASU founded ALCADDEV, the Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development. The school teaches indigenous language, culture, history, and values, agriculture, health, self-governance, conflict-resolution, and educates youth about injustices facing their communities because of mining and militarization. The school is the center of the community. It's a high school. It's a communal farm where students learn sustainable agricultural practices to bring back to their families and villages. It's a health clinic where students learn to become community health workers. It's a community center where MAPASU holds community meetings, decision-making, and celebrations. ALCADDEV not only educates students, it holds workshops for the entire community.

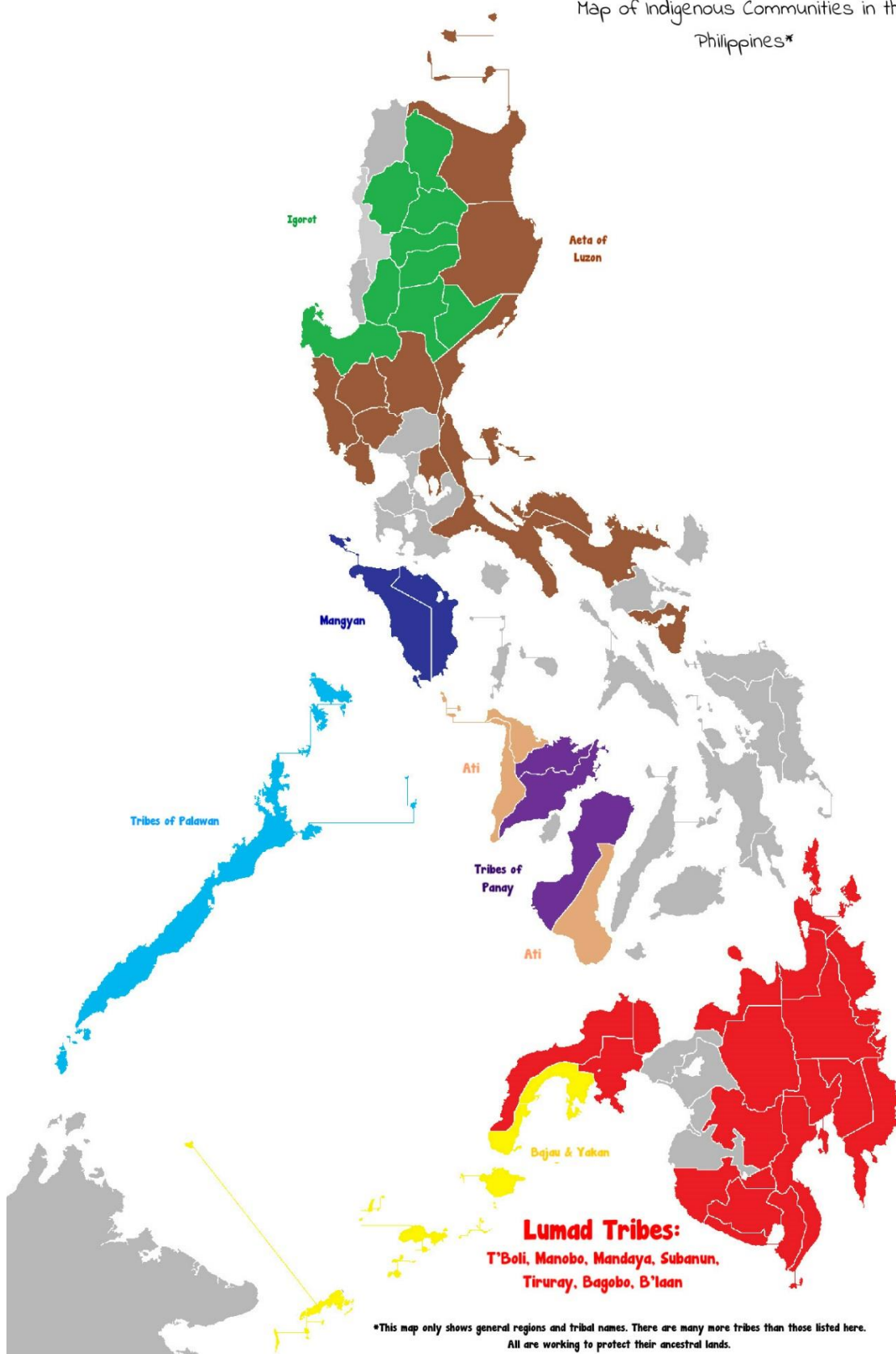
Because the school and MAPASU foster solidarity against mining companies by teaching them their rights and ensuring the community can meet its needs, the military keeps attacking the school and trying to shut it down. Because of their strong resistance, mining companies have not been able to enter their communities. They are successfully defending their ancestral lands, culture, and way of life.

On September 1, 2015, the Philippine military occupied ALCADDEV while the paramilitary it trained and armed set fire to a school building, burned down the cooperative/ community store, and killed the school's Principal and Executive Director, "Emuk" Emerito Samarca, chairman of MAPASU, "Onel" Dionel Campos, and another Lumad elder Datu "Bello" Juvello Sinzo. The entire community including children witnessed the murders. The armed men threatened to kill everyone if they did not leave. As a result, 3,000 Lumads have evacuated their mountains, homes, and farms, and are now staying at a makeshift refugee camp at the Tandang City Sports Complex.

We are calling on youth in Hawai'i, throughout Moana Nui (the Pacific), and around the world, to join in solidarity with Lumads and other indigenous Filipino peoples in their struggle for education, self-determination, and to defend their ancestral lands from mining and militarization.

Land is Life!

Map of Indigenous Communities in the
Philippines*



Lumad Action Songs

TONG TONG TONG

Verse 1

Tong tong tong pakitong kitong

(sounds)

Dakong bukid sa Mindanao

Great/ big mountain of Mindanao

Giguba sa mga langyaw

Broken/ destroyed by foreign entities

Gikuha ang mga bulawan

The resources/ gold was taken/ plundered

Mga tawo natabunan

The people were buried/ died

Verse 2

Tong tong tong pakitong kitong

(sounds)

Mga lumad sa kabukiran

The lumad in the countryside/ mountains

Namakwit sa kasyudaran

Evacuated to the cities/ Became refugees

Nangita og hustisya

To seek justice

Sa ilang kahimtang

For their condition/ situation/ what has happened to their communities

BUKID

Verse 1

May kahoy sa ibabaw sa bukid! (2x)

There are trees on top of the mountains! (2x)

**May kahoy, may kahoy, may kahoy, may
kahoy sa ibabaw sa bukid!**

There are trees, there are trees, there are trees,
there are trees, there are trees on top of the
mountains!

Verse 2

Giputol sa loggers

ang kahoy sa ibabaw sa bukid! (2x)

Loggers cut down the trees on top of the
mountains! (2x)

**Giputol, giputol, giputol, giputol,
giputol sa loggers
ang kahoy sa ibabaw sa bukid!**

Loggers cut, Loggers cut, Loggers cut, Loggers
cut, Loggers cut down the trees on top of the
mountains!

Verse 3

Nagbaha ang suba kay

giputol sa loggers

ang kahoy sa ibabaw sa bukid! (2x)

Rivers flooded, because loggers cut down the
trees on top of the mountains! (2x)

**Nagbaha, nagbaha, nagbaha, nagbaha,
nagbaha ang suba kay
giputol sa loggers
ang kahoy sa ibabaw sa bukid!**

Rivers flooded, rivers flooded, rivers flooded,
rivers flooded, rivers flooded, because loggers
cut down the trees on top of the mountains!

Verse 4

Nabanlas ang yuta kay

nagbaha ang suba kay

giputol sa loggers

ang kahoy sa ibabaw sa bukid! (2x)

Lands washed-out/ eroded, because rivers
flooded, because loggers cut down the trees
top of the mountains! (2x)

**Nabanlas, nabanlas, nabanlans, nabanlas,
nabanlas ang yuta kay
nagbaha ang suba kay
giputol sa loggers**

ang kahoy sa ibabaw sa bukid!

Lands eroded, lands eroded, lands eroded,
lands eroded, lands eroded, because rivers
flooded, because loggers cut down the trees
on top of the mountains!

Verse 5

Napatay ang tao kay

nabanlas ang yuta kay

nagbaha ang suba kay

giputol sa loggers

ang kahoy sa ibabaw sa bukid! (2x)

People died, because lands eroded, because
rivers flooded, because loggers cut down the
trees on top of the mountains! (2x)

**Napatay, napatay, napatay, napatay,
napatay ang tao kay
nabanlas ang yuta kay
nagbaha ang suba kay
giputol sa loggers**

ang kahoy sa ibabaw sa bukid!

People died, people died, people died,
people died, people died, because lands
eroded, because rivers flooded, because
loggers cut down the trees on top of the
mountains!

ALCADEV STUDENTS SPEAK

Michelle: Alcadev [...] is mainly focused on how to uplift the lives of the indigenous people while preserving our culture and way of life. It is distinct from the formal schools because its program is based on the needs of the community. Education here is not commercialized and students are not eagerly conscious of individual achievements. We are always reminded to put the interest of the community over our individual desires.

Jeric: In Alcadev, the students are empowered to serve the community. After graduation, we can go back to our community to serve. We can choose to become para-agriculturists, community organizers, community health workers or teachers. We are always encouraged to hone our skills and talents. We are given voice in decision-making. Our teachers give us opportunity to resolve conflicts among ourselves.

Jerome: What is truly remarkable with Alcadev is that we can apply what we have learned when we return to our community. Our parents are happy to see us helping them develop our small family farms. We are also given responsibility to lead in the development of communal farms. I can proudly say that through Alcadev's program, our production has increased which augments our income and enables our parents to meet the needs of the family.

Amalyn: We can see how our community has changed since Alcadev started. If before most of the households could only eat rice once a day, now almost all of the households can eat three times a day. Where can you see a school whose curriculum is designed not just for the improvement of individual students but the community at large?

The struggle for self-determination is what keeps us going. Through self-determination, our hopes will become reality. That's why we never stop doing what we can to liberate our tribe and our entire community.

Renzel: Our parents have learned their lessons well. They have realized how important education is in attaining development that's why they set up Alcadev. They said that because our elders had not been educated, they had been deceived by scrupulous lowlanders. Many had exchanged their lands for a few cans of sardines. But now, the Manobo youth are armed with knowledge from our education; we know our rights and we are ready to defend them. Today, no one can deceive us anymore.

Angelyn: In Alcadev, we do not experience the discrimination that our parents had suffered from the non-lumads when they were studying in the schools in town. It has given us opportunity to develop our skills and talents without any fear. There is no unequal treatment here.

Krista: We continue the struggle because we want economic, political, and cultural rights. We are still so young and we have so many dreams yet to be realized.

Military Attacks on Lumad Community Schools in Mindanao



9 out of 10

Lumad children have no access to education



233

documented cases of children's rights violations from 2010-2015

146 alternative schools and programs are providing education to Lumad Children



87 schools have reported cases of military attacks



The Lumads have long been deprived of basic social services, particularly health and education. Their eagerness to learn has prodded the Lumads, with the support of NGOs and church institutions to build alternative schools. But these very schools are currently under attack...

FORMS of ATTACK



Areal Bombings



Threat, Intimidation and Harassment



Divestment and Destruction of School Facilities



Use of School Facilities for Military Operations

Surigao Del Sur
June 2015 - The office of the IP School Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural Development (ALCADEV) was ransacked and vandalized by alleged military elements.

Davao del Norte
March 2014 - 309 Talainod Manobo Families fled their homes after 2 helicopters and 4 warplanes dropped bombs destroying school establishments including their source of livelihood.

Davao Oriental
June 2015 - Elements of the 67th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army attacked MISFI Academy tagging civilians as communist rebels.

Oplan Bayanihan

Under BS Aquino's counter-insurgency program "Oplan Bayanihan," a recent Department of Education (DepEd) order allowed the use of schools for military operations clearly violating international laws that prohibit the use of educational infrastructures for military purposes such as command posts, barracks detachments, and supply depots.



4 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP:



/saveourschoolsnetwork



@save_schools



saveourschoolsnetwork.wordpress.com

1 Sign

Sign the online petition to end attacks on schools and communities.

3 Volunteer

Volunteer with us during intervention activities for children victims.

2 Spread the Word

Help us spread the word by conducting awareness-raising activities in your area.

4 Donate

Donate in the Adopt-an-Indigenous-School resource drive.

Source: Children's Rehabilitation Center

VOCABULARY FOR SOLIDARITY

English	Definition	Tagalog	Ilokano	Cebuano	Manobo
Ancestor/ Aunty/ Angry					
Books/ Brother					
Community/ Culture/ Cooperative					
Dance/ Defend/ Dad					
Education/ Earth					
Farm/ Family/ Feeling/ Friend/ Freedom					
Grow/ Grandma/ Grandpa					
History/ Healing/ Health/ Happy					
Indigenous/ Identity					
Justice/ Joy					
Knowledge					
Love/ Land/ Life					
Mountain/ Mining/ Mom					
Nature/ Nurture/ Nurse					
Organize/ Opportunity					
Protect/ Peace/ Power/ People					
Question					
River/ Respect/ Relationship/ Roots					
Solidarity/ Spirit/ Sister/ Sad/ Student					
Trees/ Truth/ Teacher					
Unity/ Uncle					
Vegetables/ Volunteer					
Wisdom/ Weave/ Worms					
X					
Youth					
Z					

TAKE ACTION: MAKE ART NOT WAR

The U.S. government gives \$50 million dollars to the Philippine military every year. Our money is being used to shut down Lumad schools and push Lumad communities off of their ancestral land. Imagine what that money could be used for instead...

Draw a picture of all the things you would do for your school or community if you had \$50 million dollars.

TAKE ACTION: LETTERS OF SUPPORT, SOLIDARITY, & PEACE

Write a letter of support to the children of ALCADDEV and TRIFPSS. Below is a sample letter that you fill in or you may write your own.

Let them know you care about their struggle to protect their school and ancestral land.

Date: _____

Dear students of ALCADDEV and TRIFPSS,

My name is _____. I am _____ years old.

My ancestors are from _____.

The place I call home is _____.

I currently live in _____.

I am in _____ grade. The name of my school is _____.

I learned that you and your communities in Surigao del Sur were forced to leave your ancestral land and school to seek safety, but you are fighting to return home and live in peace.

Thank you for _____

_____.

You inspire me because _____

_____.

I hope that _____

_____.

I want you to know _____

_____.

Sincerely,

LEARN MORE!

NEWS

Head of tribal school, lumad leader slain by militia in Surigao del Sur

<http://www.interaksyon.com/article/116906/breaking-head-of-lumad-school-tribal-leader-slain-by-militia-in-surigao-del-sur>

Disarm, disband militia, Surigao del Sur gov demands as evacuees near 3,000

<http://www.interaksyon.com/article/117099/disarm-disband-militia-surigao-del-sur-gov-demands-as-evacuees-near-3000>

(Warning violent and graphic photos)

'Soldiers watched as paramilitary attacked us'

<http://bulatlat.com/main/2015/09/10/soldiers-watched-as-paramilitary-attacked-us/>

VIDEOS

Philippine Activists Fightback Against Corporate and Military Forces

http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=10725

SAVE OUR SCHOOLS: The Plight in Achieving Children's Right to Education

<http://saveourschoolsnetwork.org/index.php/save-our-schools-the-plight-in-achieving-childrens-right-to-education/>

(Warning violent and graphic photos)

Paramilitary kills Lumad leaders, school executive director

<https://www.facebook.com/tudlaproductions/videos/vb.211951365482809/1028885360456068/?type=2&theater>

WEBSITES

ALCADEV: <https://alcadev.wordpress.com/>

Save Our Schools: <https://saveourschoolsnetwork.wordpress.com/>

Karapatan: <http://www.karapatan.org/>

TAKE ACTION

U.S. Human Rights Advocates Demand Justice for Extrajudicial Killings of Lumad Leaders in Surigao Del Sur

<http://nychrp.info/2015/09/01/u-s-human-rights-advocates-demand-justice-for-extrajudicial-killings-of-lumad-leaders-in-surigao-del-sur/>

Urgent appeal for support from international community to stop bloodbath of the indigenous people of the Philippines

<http://counterview.org/2015/09/03/urgent-appeal-for-support-from-international-community-to-stop-bloodbath-of-the-indigenous-people-of-the-philippines/>